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# Working With Hispanic Learners: Information And Strategies For Educators

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**WORKING WITH HISPANIC LEARNERS:  
INFORMATION AND STRATEGIES FOR EDUCATORS**

By

Katie Stalberger

A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in English as a Second Language.

Hamline University

Saint Paul, Minnesota

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## **Project Summary**

### **Research Question**

The guiding question for my research is: *what specific home, school, and second language acquisition strategies and interventions are successful in helping Hispanic students perform so that they are not at risk, or underachieving?*

### **Project Description**

As an ESL teacher I feel my most crucial role is to advocate for the students I serve. Due to my teaching experiences and the achievement gap trends seen within my school, I have felt a calling to advocate for the Hispanic population. In the literature review my goal was to better understand multiple aspects of the Hispanic population so I can more effectively advocate for them. I created a staff development series for the 2019-20 school year, in order to help educators answer the research question: *What specific home, school, and second language acquisition strategies and interventions are successful in helping Hispanic students perform, so that they are not at risk, or underachieving?* This project gives school personnel a background on Hispanic educational achievement trends, information on Hispanic students' home lives, and provides some strategies to help Hispanics achieve.

### **Context**

I designed the content of my project for educators and school personnel, within my building, where I have a personal investment. Our building lies in the upper Midwest in the state's largest school district. The building's demographics include over 700 students, 10 percent of which are ELs (Minnesota Department of Education, 2019). The students within the building speak a variety of languages including English, Hmong, Vietnamese, Spanish, Russian, Oromo, Arabic and many others. Roughly 32.5 percent of students in our school qualify for free

and reduced lunches (Minnesota Department of Education, 2019). As an educator in this building, I participate in weekly collaboration meetings with staff. I am also involved with the small CRT committee in my building. The scholarly research I conducted pointed out the fact that weekly collaboration and a CRT committee is not enough to help Hispanic students achieve. Due to my discoveries in reviewing the current literature, I designed my capstone project around the needs and current practices of my building. My intent is that the project will positively impact our schools' practices and pedagogy with Hispanics, which in turn, could lead to increased academic achievement and cross-cultural understanding.

### **Project Explanation**

The math and reading achievement gaps reveal the Hispanic population needs attention due to their academic challenges. Therefore, in order to raise awareness within my building, I decided to design a series of hybrid professional development(PD) and professional learning community(PLC) sessions, spread throughout the 2019-2020 school year, focusing on the Hispanic population. The following is a breakdown of the timeline for the 19-20' school year:

**September or October:** The first PD session paints a picture of who the Hispanic students are in our building, how they are performing, and what educational trends are seen around the U.S. for Hispanic learners. This session will be the longest because of the amount of information covered.

**November:** This month's session will focus on cooperative learning strategies. In PLCs teachers will learn what cooperative learning strategies are and some strategy ideas to implement in their classrooms.

**December:** During this session, PLCs will discuss the importance of vocabulary instruction. Teachers will learn some best practices for their instruction.

**January:** In this PLC session, teachers will learn about the second language acquisition strategy of cognates and how they could implement using them in their practice to better meet the needs of Hispanic learners.

**February:** Throughout this PLC session, teachers will learn about translanguageing. Staff will hear about opportunities where translanguageing could help their Hispanic students.

**March:** During this PLC session, teachers will be made aware of school practices that are proven to be effective in helping narrow the achievement gap with Hispanic students. There will be a discussion of how to refine the building's work to better serve the students.

**April:** This PLC session will follow-up with cooperative learning strategies again. We will quickly review their purpose and learn a few more strategies that teachers could implement in their rooms.

**May:** The final PLC session of the year will be a reflection. At this point in the year MCA data should be available to determine if the year's work was effective in increasing Hispanic student achievement.

The goal of the professional learning series is intended to equip school personnel with the tools needed to answer the question: *What specific home, school, and second language acquisition strategies and interventions are successful in helping Hispanic students perform, so that they are not at risk, or underachieving?* The following paragraphs provide more detailed information about all of the project's components and the rationale for developing my project in this manner.

## Capstone Project Lesson Plans

**Month:** September/October

**Learning Target:** As a result of today's PD you will be able to describe facts about the Hispanic population.

**Location:** Large enough to fit all staff (library).

**Materials:** Laptop, Google Slides, True/False Hispanic facts cut apart, Katie's school picture

**Session Notes:**

1. Open up with my first class picture - Asking staff if there is anything they notice about my class picture? Highlight for them the ESL students and lead into how my passion for Hispanic students developed.
2. Briefly share what my capstone project has included
3. Slide 1 Share the learning targets for this session.
4. Slide 2 - *Hispanic* what kids come to mind? - Allow tables to share with each other
5. Slide 3 - Share who all the Hispanic kids are in the building. "Why is this information important?"
6. Slide 4 - Share about ESSA and what this means for our school
7. Slide 5 - Explain the sorting activity for groups, remind staff that sorting activities are great for students because it gives students an opportunity to talk with peers and listen to other peoples' ideas.
8. Allow groups time to work and walk around from group to group checking in with staff.
9. Slide 6 - Correctly sort Hispanic facts. When placing facts that are false share what the truth actually is
  - a. Hispanic students have the lowest graduation rate. Thankfully the percentage of Hispanic dropouts is decreasing but still almost 10 percent of Hispanics don't graduate high school.
  - b. If you are Hispanic you don't have to know how to speak Spanish. Unfortunately there are many students who are not strong in English or Spanish.
  - c. Only 52% of Hispanic children ages 3-6 attend a preschool. They also receive less center based care and are receiving parental care more than any other ethnic group.
  - d. All Hispanic children in our building do NOT receive ESL service. Jump back to slide 3 and point out kids who do not receive service.
  - e. There is an achievement gap in our building. Move into next slide
10. Show slide from MDE with achievement gap between Hispanic and White students. Share my feelings when I saw big of a discrepancy there is. Seeing this information lead me to develop my capstone research question: *what specific home, school, and second language acquisition strategies and interventions are successful in helping Hispanic students perform so that they are not at risk, or underachieving?* As a result of my research I created this PD session along with seven others that will run continuously through this school year.

**Month:** November

**Learning Target:** As a result of today's PD you will be able to implement a cooperative learning strategy.

**Location:** Meet with groups in our PLC's either grade level leads room or conference room

**Materials:** Laptop, Google Slides,

**Session Notes:**

1. Begin by opening up to PLC's to see if anyone has any burning questions about Hispanics
2. Slide 8 share the learning target for today's mini session.
3. Slide 9 Do you use cooperative learning strategies? They are an instructional strategy where students work in small groups to complete a common task. In some cases students are given a specific role. Do you know the benefits of using these types of activities? Challenges?
4. We are going to learn about the cooperative learning strategy called round table.
  - A. This strategy would work well with any day one of wonders when you are introducing the new essential question for the week.
  - B. For this strategy each group of students is sitting together.
  - C. They are given one poster or paper to write on for their group.
  - D. The poster or paper is passed around the group and each person writes or draws something depending on their age/ability level.
  - E. If students don't know something about the topic they can be encouraged to ask  
a question about the topic
  - F. Teacher decides if each group presents their posters to the class, amongst their groups discuss, have students do a gallery walk, or call on students to share what they added to their poster
5. Practice this strategy with all PLC members present using Wonders ELD. Use day one opening page with the essential question.
6. Can you think of other times during your day where this strategy may elicit more participation and discussion amongst your students?
7. Plan to try this strategy at least once before we have our next session.
8. When we have our next session next month we are going to share our glows and grows about implementing this strategy in our class/groups.

**Month:** December

**Learning Target:** As a result of today's PD you will be able to describe the vocabulary strategy of realia.

**Location:** Meet with groups in our PLC's either grade level leads room or conference room.

**Materials:** Laptop, Wonders theme/essential question for the week, Realia aligning to curriculum, poster paper to record ideas/questions

**Session Notes:**

1. Open up with grows and glows from cooperative learning strategy. Share my own personal findings first.
2. Slide 11 Share the learning targets from this short session.
3. Slide 12 How do you teach vocabulary? If teachers don't have ideas remind them of pictures they use, think alouds, etc.
4. Show video about realia
  - A. Remind teachers these strategies are good for ALL students
  - B. This strategy helps build background knowledge
  - C. Great to use when you want kids talking
5. Use current week/day in Wonders to incorporate the use of realia. Bring in as many "everyday" items that go along with the weekly theme/essential question. Let teachers know if the items were bought specifically to use with wonders or if they were items from home.
6. Demonstrate having teachers either share what they know about the realia that was brought in or ask questions about it. Record their ideas on a circle map. Remind staff that leaving out the student ideas to refer back to later in the week also helps students make connections.
7. Plan to try this strategy at least once before we have our next session.
8. When we have our next session next month we are going to share our glows and grows about implementing this strategy in our class/groups.

**Month:** January

**Learning Target:** As a result of today's PD you will be able to describe what cognates are and have an idea of where to implement using cognates.

**Location:** Meet with groups in our PLC's either grade level leads room or conference room.

**Materials:** Laptop, Copies of cognate lists for staff, highlighters,

**Session Notes:**

1. Open up with grows and glows from the vocabulary strategy of using realia. Share my own personal findings first.
2. Slide 14 Share the learning target for the short session
3. Question audience if they have heard of cognates?
4. Give the definition - words that exist in two languages that have the same root or origin. There are over 20,000 English, Spanish cognates.
5. Slide 15 Handout copies of cognate lists from websites.
6. Allow teachers time to read over lists and highlight words they feel would be important to use in their practice.
7. Slide 16 Play Youtube video of how to use cognates in the classroom.



8. Discuss how teachers could see themselves using cognates in their rooms. Share some ideas that have been helpful like posting with English, during guided reading, slide 17 may also be helpful when meeting with 3rd-5th grade.
9. Plan to try this strategy at least once before we have our next session.
10. When we have our next session next month we are going to share our glows and grows about implementing this strategy in our class/groups.

**Month:** February

**Learning Target:** As a result of today's PD you will be able to describe what translanguageing is.

**Location:** Meet with groups in our PLC's either grade level leads room or conference room.

**Materials:** Laptops for all staff present,

**Session Notes:**

1. Open up with grows and glows from implementing the second language acquisition strategy of using cognates. Share my own personal findings first.
2. Slide 18 Share the learning target of today's session.
3. Slide 19 Ask staff if they've seen students read, heard students speak or seen students write in their home languages in school. Why do you think you do or do not hear them using their home language in either reading, writing or speaking?
4. Define translanguageing - is a strategic, bilingual, communication strategy or linguistic approach. This strategy allows students or teachers to use whichever language or combination of languages best support student learning and/or support teaching (Ackmerman & Tuzi, 2015)
5. Prezi on translanguageing found on the bottom of slide 19.
6. Slide 20 An easy way to start embracing students' home language is by incorporating the use of Story books Canada.
7. Pass out laptops to everyone and have them navigate to the site.
8. Model finding a few things on the site but then allows teachers time to explore the site.
9. Plan to try this strategy at least once before we have our next session.
10. When we have our next session next month we are going to share our glows and grows about implementing this strategy in our class/groups.

**Month:** March

**Learning Target:** As a result of today's PD you will be able to identify school structures we have in place that increase student achievement.

**Location:** Meet with groups in our PLC's either grade level leads room or conference room.

**Materials:** Laptop, video interview with cultural liaison, Potential interview with Hispanic students, chart paper or whiteboard marker for notes

**Session Notes:**

1. Open up with grows and glows from cooperative learning strategy. Share my own personal findings first.

2. Slide 21 Share learning target for our PLC session.
3. Present video interview with cultural liaison, and potential students. Allow staff to share reactions.
4. Slide 22 Question staff as to what practices we currently have in place to increase student achievement? Record staff ideas.
5. Slide 23
  - Cultural deficit theory “claims that persistent poverty creates cognitive deprivation, ignorance and low aspirations” (Riojas-Cortez, 2000, p. 225). Challenged by : CRT and how racism and deficit thinking impact minority students.
  - High expectations increases students’ achievement, empowers students when metacognitive skills are explicitly taught, in high expectation classrooms, students understand what is expected of them with regard to their behaviors, attention, and attitudes towards the teacher and peers.
  - Collaboration in collaborative meetings when students are struggling, teachers neglect to place blame on the students. Instead, teachers look within themselves and their teams to find solutions.
  - Interventions - extended day and the library, interventions we use at this school.
6. What would you like to work or focus on for the following month? Is there something that we are doing that you feel could use refinement? For each group share what I personally would like to work on and with which specific students. Record responses to be able to refer back to at the next month’s session.

**Month:** April

**Learning Target:** As a result of today’s PD you will be able to implement the cooperative learning strategies of numbered heads and tea party.

**Location:** Meet with groups in our PLC’s either grade level leads room or conference room.

**Materials:** Laptop, Notes on what participants wanted to work on from the previous month, Current Wonders curriculum, chart paper

**Session Notes:**

1. Open up with grows and glows from intentionally focusing on one of the methods our school uses to increase student achievement. Share my own personal findings first.
2. Slide 24 Share our learning target for PLC session - let audience respond with if they’ve heard of these cooperative learning strategies and if so, how they’ve implemented them in their rooms. Also could share if staff is continuing to use the strategy of round table and how that is going.
3. Slide 25 Introduce cooperative learning strategy of **numbered heads**
  - Students are put together in teams of four. Students then number off one to four. A question is posed to the class and groups discuss their answer. The teacher randomly calls a number and that student needs to share their teams answer (American Federation of Teachers (2015, para. 4).

- Practice this strategy with current math concept for the grade levels
4. Slide 26 Explain the learning strategy of **tea party**
    - The students are split into two groups. The groups form concentric circles facing each other. A question is posed to the group and students discuss the answer with the person facing them. After a designated amount of time the outer circle moves to the right so that students have new partners. Then pose a new question or have students discuss the same one. Repeat the process over and over (American Federation of Teachers (2015, para. 4).
    - Practice this strategy with current math concept for the grade levels
  5. Discuss how could we see these strategies being used with other content areas.
  6. Plan to try these strategies at least once before we have our next session.
  7. When we have our next session next month we are going to share our glows and grows about implementing these strategies in our class/groups.

**Month:** May

**Learning Target:** As a result of today's PD you will be able to discuss the year and if our intentional efforts paid off.

**Location:** Meet with groups in our PLC's either grade level leads room or conference room.

**Materials:** Laptop, MDE MCA data,

**Session Notes:**

1. Open up with grows and glows from the cooperative learning strategies: tea party and numbered heads. Share my own personal findings first.
2. Slide 27 Share learning target for today's PLC session.
3. Review preliminary MCA results from 2020. Talk about aspects that went well over the year.
4. Find out from staff areas they would still like support from me on.
5. Challenge staff to see if they can think of a few things they can do the following school year to continue supporting Hispanic students.

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## True False Sorting Activity

Hispanics students have  
the highest graduation rates.

If you are Hispanic you  
know how to speak Spanish.

Hispanic people originate  
from many different countries.

They are the fastest growing  
ethnic group in the U. S.

Many Hispanics, over 25% nationwide  
live in poverty.

Many Hispanic children  
attend preschool.

Nationwide Hispanic make up the  
greatest population of EL's.

They are the largest group of  
long-term ELs.

In our building all the Hispanic  
students receive EL services.

There is not an achievement  
gap between White and  
Hispanics in our building.

**Google form questionnaire sent out anonymously to staff:**

Hi All!

I am currently working on my capstone project. I would like to share with you some of the information, best practices and data I've learned along the way to best meet the needs of Hispanic students.

You have no obligation to attend these voluntary sessions. However, in order to get a sense of what people would prefer for these sessions could you please respond to the following questions:

1. I am interested in being apart of a PLC to learn about best meeting the needs of Hispanic students:

☐ Yes

☐ No

2. I prefer meeting:

☐ Before school

☐ After school

3. If you have a digital day preference or a day of the week preference please let me know.

☐ \_\_\_\_\_

4. Is there anything regarding Hispanic students you would like to see discussed during our

learning series?

□ \_\_\_\_\_





As a result of today's PD you will be able to:

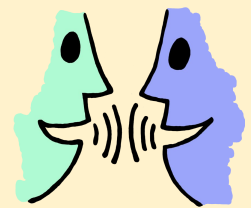
- Describe facts about the Hispanic population.

When I say the word  
Hispanic is there a student  
or two who comes to mind?



According to registration information,  
these are the Hispanic students in our  
building.

Why is this important?







Sort with your group  
if these statements are:

## True or False



Hispanics students have the highest graduation rates.	If you are Hispanic you know how to speak Spanish.
Hispanic people originate from many different countries.	They are the fastest growing ethnic group in the U. S.
Many Hispanics, over 25% nationwide live in poverty.	Many Hispanic children attend preschool.
Nationwide Hispanic make up the greatest population of EL's.	They are the largest group of long-term ELs.
In our building all the Hispanic students receive EL services.	There is not an achievement gap between White and Hispanics in our building.



Sort with your group  
if these statements are:  
**True or False**



They are Many Hispanic children  
long-term attend preschool. They make up the  
I They greatest population of EL's.  
the ethnic group in the U. S.  
\_\_\_\_\_s.

**Insert current MDE data**



As a result of today's  
PD you will be able to:

Implement a cooperative  
learning strategy.



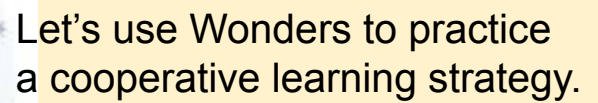


# Cooperative Learning

Do you use them?

Benefits?

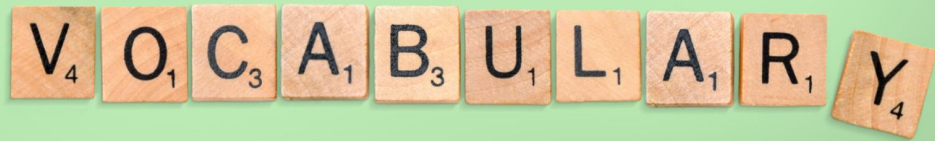
Challenges?





As a result of today's  
PD you will be able to:

describe the vocabulary  
strategy of realia.



How do you find yourself developing vocab?  
What do you do with Wonders, besides Wonders?

# REALIA IN EDUCATION

*A Proven Strategy for  
Teaching ESL, ELL &  
Bilingual Students*





As a result of today's PD you will be able to:

- describe what cognates are.
- have an idea of where to implement using cognates.



<https://www.readingrockets.org/article/using-cognates-develop-comprehension>  
[https://myedplus.org/pluginfile.php/9762/mod\\_resource/content/0/ListOfMathCognates.pdf](https://myedplus.org/pluginfile.php/9762/mod_resource/content/0/ListOfMathCognates.pdf)  
<https://www.realfastspanish.com/vocabulary/spanish-cognates>  
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1110958.pdf>

## HOW TO USE COGNATES IN CONTEXT





## Common Greek and Latin roots that are cognates in English and Spanish

Root	Meaning	Origin	English examples	Spanish examples
aud	hear	Latin	auditorium audition	auditorio audición
astir	star	Greek	astrology astronaut	astrología astronauta
bio	life	Greek	biography biology	biografía biología
dict	speak, tell	Latin	dictate dictator	dictar dictador
mit, mis	send	Latin	mission transmit	misión transmitir
ped	foot	Latin	pedal pedestal	pedal pedestal
phon	sound	Greek	phoneme microphone	fonema micrófono
port	carry	Latin	transport portable	transportar portátil



As a result of today's PD you will be able to:

- describe what translanguageing is



Do you hear students speaking their home languages in your room?

<https://prezi.com/myq3fuk9xfyq/translanguaging/>



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# Storybooks Canada

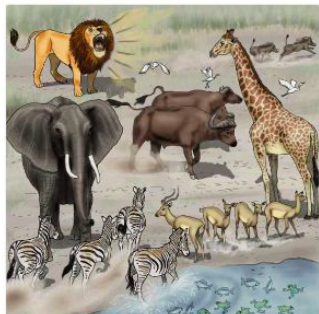
[Change language](#)

[Change level](#)

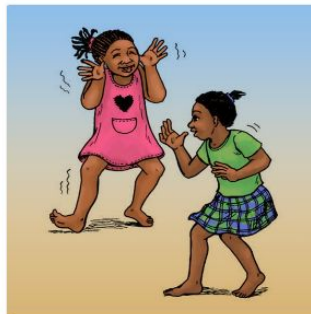
Storybooks Canada is a free open educational resource that promotes literacy and language learning in homes, schools, and communities. It makes 40 stories from the [African Storybook](#) available with text and audio in English, French, and the most widely spoken [immigrant and refugee languages](#) of Canada. We are also developing [Indigenous Storybooks](#) and the [Global Storybooks](#) literacy portal. Share and enjoy!



I like to read!



Counting animals



Feelings



Fire

<https://www.storybookscanada.ca/>



As a result of today's  
PD you will be able to:

- identify school structures  
we have in place that increase  
student achievement

Can you think of any practices we have in place aimed at increasing student achievement?



Can you think of any practices we have in place aimed at increasing student achievement?



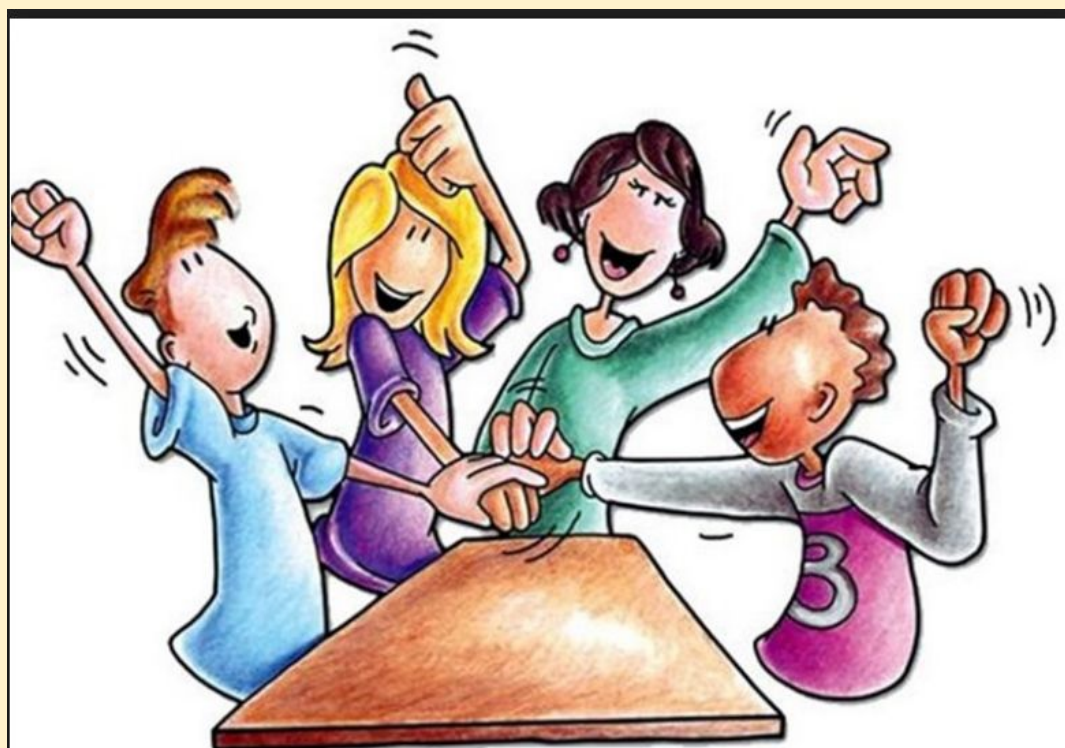
Cultural Deficit Theory vs. CRT  
High Expectations, Collaboration, Interventions



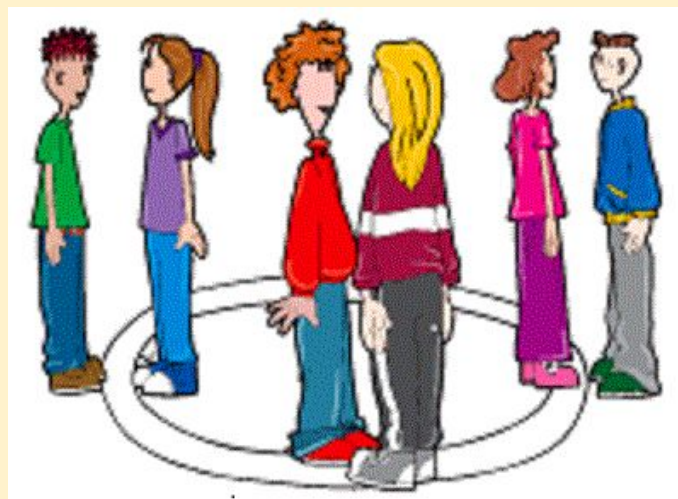
As a result of today's PD you will be able to:

- implement cooperative learning strategies
  - \*numbered heads\*
  - \*tea party\*





**Numbered Head Together**



Tea Party

As a result of today's  
PD you will be able to:



Discuss the year.  
Has our intentional  
efforts paid off?